THE

AERONAUT.

No. 55. July 16. 1817.

A man or woman, knowing how to keep a just medium of action, is now, and, we believe, always has been, a rare commodity; if, indeed such an article ever existed. If we avoid one extreme with

success, it is only that we may fall with the greater blindness into the other; — in shunning the steeps of ambition, we sink into the deeps of obscurity; in dreading hazard, we yield up enterprize; in shrinking uninteresting dullness, we slide into unpardonable folly; and cautious of silly familiarity, we resolve ourselves into frigid moroseness, and uninterrupted silence.

All this conduct is useless, because it fulfils not the ends of creation. The monitor, when he exhorts, would not mislead; for so, instruction would be without profit, and labor without avail. Reformation cannot be produced by perfect contrarieties, for no end is effected; no correction made. One thing is absolutely wrong; its opposite is not strictly right.

From the erroneous notions which are thus entertained by men, as to propriety of conduct with respect to others, is derived among

other evils, that which forms the subject of our present remarks. It is the exact reverse, of chattering in empty striplings, and garrulousness in doting old age; and, without doubt, is equally intolerable with both; equally tedious and irksome, equally barren and uninstructive.

But let us not be misunderstood. We by no means would insinuate in what we have said, that total gravity in male or female, is indicative of an entire absence of understanding. That the grave are often dull, we have no hesitation to pronounce: but other circumstances originate it, very various, and very arbitrary; accidents, education, fortune, and others, without number, and without measure. These are contingencies, which talent cannot control, because they are uncertain in their visits, and doubtful in their continuance. When in the vigor of age, we may rise out of poverty, because nothing can quench genius; and penury

is not a necessary attendant, nor its influence more than temporary. But infancy cannot counteract injudicious management, prevent improper instruction, oppose what it does not know, or avoid what it does not foresee.

But, gentle reader, we might exhort you in this way, to accord with our opinions, and second our assertions, time without limit, and yet you would probably never relax. You would, perhaps, continue your own view of things, with the same undeviating firmness, the same unyielding pertinacity; maintain, that the constantly grave, had not the qualities of greatness, and the continually silent, the faculty of utterance. There is nothing, after all, like referring to fact, on dubious questions, and controversial discussions; truth and evidence, prescribe bounds to opinion, and settle grounds of altercation; or

gument cannot weaken them, sophistry cannot destroy them.- Having thus premised, we introduce, by way of illustration, an Epistle from a correspondent, which will remove ambiguity, fix wavering resolutions, and terminate useless contentions.

To the Authors of the AERONAUT.

Gentlemen.

In the city in which I at present reside, there dwells a personage, as remarkable for the vigor of his powers, as when young he was noted, for the weakness of his capacity, the sluggishness of his faculties, and the childishness of his conceptions. He once saw nothing, read nothing, spoke nothing; gloomy severity ushered in his appearance, and the darkness of midnight sat upon his brow. Yet he seems to have risen at once from his torpor of lethargy, and burst on a sudden from the

thraldom of mental childhood; he shines wherever he appears, amuses wherever he enters, enlightens with the lustre of his genius, & cheers with the energy of his wit.

DICK PENSIVE was an only son of parents, upon whom nature had conferred little, and art still less: to whom day was but a continuation of night, as being consumed, in dreams of vacancy, and the sleep of indolity: who lived without an object, either of hope or fear, exultation or shame; neither employed in observation of things, nor incited by curiosity for knowledge. They came upon the stage, and left it, without notice, and without remark; they existed unknown, they perished unwept. In these few words, the eventful history of their actions is contained; but we cannot dismiss them from view, inasmuch as their conduct, as will be seen in the sequel of the tale, had such an influence

on the character and disposition of my much valued friend.

All the knowledge which DICK at present possesses, you must know, was not attained, until a very late period; for the guides of his infant career, were not the best calculated in the world to direct his course, or develope his opening powers. Unhappily, the tender solicitude of these good-natured dotards, was carried to too monstrous a length; and while they were fearful of oppressing with too much instruction, they knew not what his shoulders could bear, or what his intellects could carry. In short, from the feeble inefficiency & tremulous apprehension, of those whom nature and law had consigned as his protectors, DICK was actually verging towards manhood, before he could decypher a sentence with accuracy,

or pronounce a word with exactness.

As years increase, the character most commonly developes. But not so with my hero. As successive summers performed their periodical revolutions, no change in mind, no alteration in conduct, seemed to indicate, the dawnings of reason, and the beginnings of perception. In the chamber, in the parlor, or in solitude, he was alike the same; and in society, he sat, as if incapable of joining, in the hilarity, the wit, the sense, or the amusements, of those few who came within his notice. He took no part in conversation, and made scarce a reply to an enquiry, either trivial or important, without meaning, or necessary to be answered; never ventured an opinion, never put forth an observation.

now, what in such a lamentable case, was to be done, or effected? All who saw him, wondered, pitied, or laughed; discoursed on the singularity of his appearance, and enquired the causes of his silence. Ridicule was heaped upon him, others followed him, while he remained unconscious of either. I commiserated his case, and resolved upon his cure. I knew, that while silly weakness, and unsophisticated ignorance, resided in themselves, a change which they could not fulfil, no hopes might be entertained of recovery or amendment, in any single part of his character.

Now you see me, from being an independent man, became a responsible being to those, who rejoiced that I undertook, what they were unable to perform.

By what I had offered, I had made promises; and if they were not fulfilled, the shame devolved upon myself. I used my noblest endeavors, summed up my powers to their utmost limit. The benevolence of my undertaking amused me with expectations, which otherwise I could not have entertained; for every thing was against, and nothing for me. With these considerations all operating upon me, I commenced my arduous work, doubtful of the issue, but resolute in my exertions.

Mental instruction being the "one thing needful" with DICK, that I administered, and that he received. What I offered with anxiety, he accepted with gladness. The charm broke — his energies came — his gravity fled. He seemed overcome with the prospect of the field which was opened to his sight, and was apparently filled with the same ecstacies, which thrill the blind

man, when suddenly admitted to the blessings of vision, in the light of day. He drew in the consciousness of his strength, and the wonders of his power; felt new sensations, new feelings, new ideas; expatiated without limit, & roamed without control.

But you will here, doubtless, draw a comparison, between what he is, and what he was. You will do rightly. But if you will recollect a little, you will know, that the reasons of the change, are explained a few pages back; and you will find, that talent, whatever be its order, whatever its extent, must be developed by circumstances, before it can be displayed in strength; that as it unfolds, it dazzles, as it expands, it delights. The flame of genius cannot burn, till some friendly hand administers the fuel to the lurking fire. Amid the

wandering hordes that roam over the plain, and howl in the forest, there, doubtless exist some, whose untaught minds, in their favorite climes, and under their munitions hands, might grasp every variety of knowledge, and seize every diversity of subject. DICK was grave, not because he could not be merry, but because he had nothing to be merry about; nothing to employ his faculties, nothing to divert his attention. When his situation was changed, his manners were altered. He once was without any thing to plead, he now has every thing to delight. His gravity was a consequence of his fortune, not an ingredient in his constitution. Insert this narrative, and you will much oblige, your humble servant,

CURATOR.

Q.